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AUTHOR Furtwengler, Carol B.
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ABSTRACT

Tennessee initiated a Career Ladder Program for teachers in July 1984. The program is designed to recruit, retain, and reward outstanding teachers. Teachers who obtain upper career ladder status receive financial rewards ranging from 2,000 to 7,000 dollars per year. This status is achieved by participation in a comprehensive evaluation process. This paper covers the research and subsequent legislation behind the program and the development of the evaluation system, with particular emphasis on the use of student achievement data in the latter. In addition to teacher interviews with peer evaluators, the program involves evaluative information from principals and students. Tests used by teachers, material used to assess students' initial achievement levels, and student achievement records are assessed. During the first 2 years, the program involved teachers of grades 3 through 12. After the second year of field testing, 204 teacher records were randomly selected for analysis from a total population of 1,625 records. Although the first year program evaluation proved disappointing, the second year results were more encouraging. An outline of the teacher competencies and indicators with measurement statements, and a chart of how the competencies and indicators are obtained are appended. (TJH)

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Symposium Presentation By

Dr. Carol B. Furtwengler

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Use of Student Achievement Information in the Performance Evaluation of Teachers in the Tennessee Career Ladder Program

Introduction

The State of Tennessee initiated a Career Ladder Program for teachers in July, 1984. This program is designed to recruit, retain, and reward outstanding teachers. Teachers who obtain upper career ladder status (II or III) receive financial rewards ranging from $2,000 to $7,000 a year. This status is achieved by participation in a comprehensive evaluation process. Great debate has centered on the teacher evaluation system. From the initial introduction of the "Master Teacher" legislation, the issue of "process" vs. "product" evaluation has been argued. Pressure has come from the legislature and from policy boards to use student performance information in the evaluation of teachers who enlisted in the Career Ladder Program. This paper outlines the background and legal requirements for the use of student achievement information for Career Ladder evaluations in Tennessee, discusses the development of the evaluation system including methods to incorporate student performance information, and reports the current status of student achievement information in the evaluation system.

The Legislation

During 1981-82, the Tennessee Comprehensive Education Study was conducted to make recommendations to the legislature for ways to improve the educational system in the state of Tennessee. This study received $300,000 from the legislature to develop a blueprint for future directions for education in the state. The study, completed in December 1982, mentioned in four separate places the need to reward teachers, to have master teachers, and to have uniform evaluation across the state. It stated:

> The State Board of Education and LEAs [sic] should investigate ways of rewarding outstanding teachers (as determined by fair and impartial evaluation) over and beyond their set salaries.
>
> The State Board of Education should consider requiring an apprenticeship program for beginning teachers prior to professional certification. During such a period, the apprentice-

> teacher would be closely supervised and evaluated by a master teacher.
>
> Uniform evaluation instruments should be developed at the state level for all certificated personnel and be required for usage by LEAs.
>
> In developing or providing such an instrument, the State Department should utilize current research on evaluative techniques and statewide practices.

This study provided the background for what would become known as the Better Schools Program. A major part of that program was the Master Teacher Program (now called Career Ladder Program). The involvement of the legislature in the initial stages of reform and its support of the Tennessee Comprehensive Educational Study provided the foundation for an extensive program to improve the public schools.

On January 28, 1983, Governor Lamar Alexander delivered his State of Education Address in which he proposed his ten-point Better Schools Program. This comprehensive school reform package included mary key items recommended by the legislature's comprehensive study, for instance, basic skills, computer skills, and additional math and science requirements for high school students. Governor Alexander, however, considered the most important point to be The Master Teacher Program. He stated:

> Today, Tennessee's teachers are paid about as well, on the average, as other Tennessee workers: about 82 percent of the national average. But the best teachers get paid no more than the worst. We expect teachers to reward excellence in the classroom, but we don't reward their excellence in the classroom. We don't attract the best young people to teach. Because they have so little to look forward to financially, we can't keep our best teachers teaching.

During the 1983 legislative session, a bipartisan group of six legislators banded together to draft legislation in support of the Master Teacher Program. The Better Schools Master Teacher--Master Administrator Act of 1983 (later retitled the Comprehensive Education Reform Act or "CERA") was introduced in March, 1983. The bipartisan bill had the support of the Alexander administration and

many educational groups, such as the Tennessee School Boards Association. However, it did not have the support the Tennessee Education Association. The bill was postponed one year for further study, and a legislative Select Committee was appointed to study the legislation and related issues.

The initial bill contained language which mandated the use of student achievement data in the evaluation process. CERA stated, "The state board of education shall by rule prescribe the procedures and criteria for evaluation of teachers. . . . *Such rules shall include . . . consideration of pupil performance . . .* " During the year of postponement of the bill, one of the many issues debated was student achievement data. Legislators and the public, in general, supported the idea of using student achievement data to evaluate teachers. Experts who testified before the Select Committee and the Certification Commission (responsible for developing the evaluation system), however, cautioned against writing this requirement into the legislation. Eventually, the language regarding the use of student achievement data for teacher evaluation was modified. The final language in the 1984 CERA stated, "*The rules (for evaluation) shall include . . . indicators of student progress, where applicable.*"

Development of the Evaluation System

While the legislature was putting the final touches on the reform bill, the Certification Commission (the policy body responsible for the evaluation system), was finalizing an evaluation system for field testing. In order to meet the mandate implied in the law, the Certification Commission contracted with researchers to glean from the literature those things that good teachers do which have an effect on student achievement. The rationale expressed to the Select Committee and to the Certification Committee stated:

> Because evaluative criteria provide directions for change, it seems important that the criteria chosen to delineate positions on a career ladder be related to whatever the policy seeks to accomplish. If the outcome sought for a career ladder plan is the improvement of teaching effectiveness and so student learning, it seems essential to choose criteria for evaluation that directly relate to these outcomes.

Hence, the competencies and indicators used in the evaluation system for Career Ladder purposes were identified as being related

During the second year of the program, 1985-86, a decision was made to field test a new indicator within the Evaluation of Student Progress Domain. This indicator was termed "Improves Student Performance" and had two measurement statements: a) Improves learners' academic achievement in relevant subject areas(s) and b) Improves learners' attitudes toward learning.

The new indicator was field tested by gathering information from the principal questionnaire, the student questionnaire, and the teacher/evaluator dialogue. The principal was asked to rate the teacher on a ten-point career ladder scale on whether the teacher "Improves learners' academic achievement in relevant subject areas," and whether the teacher "Improves' learners attitudes toward learning."

Students in grades three through six were asked two questions that they rated on a five-point scale (1 rarely to 5 almost always). One was, "Have you learned a lot from this class? The other was, "Do you like to learn in this class?" Students in grades seven through twelve, using the same five-point rating scale, rated these statements: "I have learned about the subject being taught in this class;" and "I have enjoyed learning about the subject being taught in this class."

During the teacher/evaluator Dialogue, a one hour period of information exchange between the teacher and the peer evaluator on the evaluation competency, teachers were asked two field test questions related to Improves Student Performance. They were, "How well do students perform in your class? How do you know what progress they have made in knowledge, skills, and attitudes?" For this part of the Dialogue, teachers were asked to have information available about the following:

- -Material used at the beginning of the year to assess student's current achievement level.
- -Samples of teacher-made or commercial tests used to monitor student achievement during the year and end-of-year tests
- -Student achievement records (examples: grade book, Basic Skills First student and class reports, other student record management systems.

Teachers' also were told to bring information related to, and to be prepared to discuss with the evaluator, how student achievement in their classes compared to other classes in the school, system and

state (if available). One of the strengths of this approach is that it requires the teacher to set learning goals and objectives for students at the beginning of the year. Pre-tests are administered and post-tests allow the teacher to determine his/her success at improving student performance. This information is then presented to the evaluator with supporting documentation.

The peer evaluator rates the teacher's evidence of student academic achievement commensurate with background/ability of students and the teacher's evidence of improvement in student attitude toward learning. During evaluator training, emphasis was placed on gaining consistent teacher ratings on these two statements. The scale points were defined as:

1 - Little or no evidence; vague or weakly supported statements of student progress;

2 - Partial listing of unrelated evidence; anecdotal statements; unclear or fragmentary evidence; evidence not indicating student growth;

3 - Several lines of evidence presented; comparison of students to other groups that indicates parity of student growth;

4 - Use of pre-post testing, gain scores, growth measure that indicate substantive increase in achievement/attitude; and

5 - Exemplary approaches to evidence, outstanding efforts to document; comprehensive plan to give and use evidence where clear results of significant gain are indicated.

In addition to indicating a numerical rating for each teacher based on this five-point scale, evaluators included written comments in the dialogue scoring booklet.

The results from the first year of field testing were discouraging. Evaluators reported dissatisfaction with the field test training and with their ability to be consistent (and knowledgeable) in their ratings. Training for the second year of field testing was restructured and renewed emphasis was placed on gaining greater

consistency among evaluators in rating student performance information.

After the second year of field testing, 204 teacher records were randomly selected for analysis from a total population of 1625 records. Improvements were noted in the dialogue scores that teachers received on the Improves Student Performance indicator. The Department of Education Research Division reports:

> (1) There was consistency across evaluators for written comments and ratings. The ratings were consistent with the letter and spirit of the evaluator comments as judged by the researchers. When deviations in the numerical ratings from the sense of the written comments were observed--in about 7.7 percent of the cases--the differences tended to be only one or two scale points instead of the three or four scale points [observed] in the first year results.
>
> (2) The 1986-87 ratings of student performance and attitude items were more independent. Last year, the evaluators had tended to rate items at the same scale points as previous and subsequent items were rated, regardless of the written comments or the evidence. We suspected a "halo effect," concluded that the ratings had questionable validity, and recommended that they not be used as part of teacher evaluations. This year, evaluators awarded rating scale points that appeared to be more consistent with the written comments than with the rating of prior and subsequent items. We concluded that ratings were the result of independent judgements by the evaluators. It seems clear that this year's evaluators awarded points based upon the evidence presented by teachers. The results suggest that the evaluators had a clear idea of what kind and level of evidence merited what rating score.
>
> (3) Evaluators' written comments were clearly based upon dialogue data, and not observation data. When observation comments were included, they were labeled, for example, a comment like, "saw this approach used with students."
>
> (4) The comments and ratings separated performance from process. The process of collecting and presenting evidence was not sufficient, in the vast majority of cases, to result in a

rating of more than "3." Higher ratings (4's and 5's) required definitive evidence of student improvement in addition to a description of the types of evidence that were presented.

(5) Evaluators' comments and the associated numerical ratings were consistent with an operational definition of the scale points (see above).

At this point in time, only mean scores for the student and principal questionnaire items are available from the State Department of Education. Further statistical analyses have not been completed on this information.

Conclusions

What does all this mean? Using high-inference judgments of students, principals, and evaluators is a new approach to attempting to include student evaluation information in teacher evaluation. The fact that information is gathered not only on student achievement information but also on student attitude toward learning reveals the importance given to overall student growth in the evaluation system. While high-inference judgments are common practice in evaluation decisions, this is the first combination of the use of high-inference decisions with actual student learning outcomes. The decision is made by another peer teacher who usually has experience teaching in the same grade level or subject area.

Although the State Department of Education's research staff recommends using the questions on the teacher/evaluator dialogue as a part of the teacher evaluation system, this opinion is not shared by others in the department or by others who worked on designing the initial evaluation system. At this time, the student achievement data question continues to be field-tested for a third year for further study. The author concurs with this decision.

The State Department of Education's research division reports that the second year of field testing showed improvement in the evaluators ability to match ratings with written comments and to differentiate ratings for student achievement and student attitude toward learning. It appeared that evaluators were also able to separate dialogue information from classroom observation

information and to discriminate between the presentation of evidence of student achievement and the quality of student learning. Before this type of high inference information is used for teacher evaluation, however, several other areas need to be examined, namely:

1. The student and principal questionnaire data needs to be examined and compared to the information obtained from the teacher/evaluator dialogues. Is their agreement between the evaluator's ratings and the ratings of the students and principal? If a descrepancy exists, is there test data to substantiate either opinion?

2. The information from each field test measurement statement needs to be compared to the total evaluation outcome. If the evaluative criteria are based on student outcomes, a high correlation should be found between high scores from the field test items and teachers achieving upper career ladder status.

3. Manuals need to be developed for evaluator training that contain examples and information to insure consistency during the training process. Particular emphasis needs to be placed on separating the presentation of evidence of student performance by the teacher and whether that evidence actually reveals student achievement gains.

4. The evidence that the teacher brings to the dialogue session needs to be validated with other evidence of student performance. An examination needs to be done to determine how much and in what ways any differences found occur across grade levels and subject areas.

5. If possible, actual student performance information from selected school systems needs to be compared to the field test results from ratings of individual teachers. This will determine if there is a positive correlation between high inference items and actual testing results.

This approach to gathering information on student evaluation information is one that needs further study. The attractive part of the approach is that it puts responsibility with the teacher to carefully assess student performance at the beginning of the year and to monitor student gains throughout the year. It may be a

viable approach to use when statistical testing information is not available for every subject and grade level and when more than limited testing information is wanted for assessment purposes.

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Appendix A

COMPETENCIES AND INDICATORS WITH MEASUREMENT STATEMENTS

I. Prepares for instruction effectively (Planning for Instruction)

A. Establishes appropriate instructional goals and related objectives consistent with the curriculum

- Establishes long-term instructional goals
- Selects goals and sequences instructional objectives in accordance with goals
- Teaches material relevant to his or her instructional assignment
- Addresses both lower and higher level thinking skills

B. Prepares instructional plans and materials incorporating principles of effective instruction

- Prepares teaching procedures for introducing instructional goals and objectives to learners
- Identifies content, materials, and media needed for the instructional program and arranges for them

C. Creates, selects or modifies instructional plans and materials to accommodate learner instructional levels

- Selects/adapts/creates instructional materials to accommodate learner differences

II. Uses teaching strategies and procedures appropriate to the content, objectives and learner (Teaching Strategies)

A. Provides a clear description of the learning task and its content

- Provides correct/current information
- Provides an overview of material to be covered
- Provides directions and explanations related to lesson content/concept
- Helps learner recognize the integration of content/concepts

- Paces learning tasks according to difficulty of material

- Provides examples of how task is to be completed

- Distinguishes steps in the learning task

- Provides appropriate language model for students

B. Monitors learner understanding and reteaches as necessary

- Identifies learner instructional levels before beginning instruction

- Clarifies directions and explanations when learners misunderstand

- Paces learning activities to accommodate learner differences

- Attends to learner needs in order of importance

C. Provides learners appropriate practice and review

- Requires learners to apply skills and concepts

- Uses responses and questions from learners in teaching

- Utilizes alternative and supplemental activities which address instructional objectives

- Requires learners to explain, compare or evaluate content/concepts

- Provides supervised practice with the application of content/concepts

- Provides seatwork/homework for independent practice

D. Establishes and maintains learner involvement in the learning task

- Helps learners recognize the purpose and importance of the learning activities

- Maintains learner focus on the learning task

- Provides learners opportunities to participate in learning tasks

- Monitors learner involvement with the learning task and adjusts teaching procedures to enhance learner involvement

III. Uses evaluation to improve instruction (Evaluation of Student Progress)

A. Uses information about learner performance to improve the instructional process

- Uses teacher-made or teacher-selected evaluation materials or procedures to obtain information about student progress

- Uses learner performance data for diagnosis/remediation of learner needs

- Uses learner performance data for improving instructional content/curriculum

- Identifies diagnostic and assessment materials and procedures needed for the instructional program and arranges for them

B. Reports learner status and progress to learners and their parents

- Provides feedback/correction of errors during supervised practice

- Explains grading/scoring standards to learners and parents

- Returns corrected seatwork/homework, tests and other work promptly

- Provides specific information for improvement of work

C. **Improves Student Performance (Field Test Only--1986-87 as explained on page 11)**

- **Improves learners' academic achievement in relevant subject area(s)**

- **Improves learners' attitudes toward learning**

IV. Manages classroom activities effectively (Classroom Management)

A. **Establishes and maintains appropriate learner behavior**

- Provides guidelines for learner behavior

- Applies Specific and reasonable sanctions for inappropriate learner behavior in a consistent manner

- Provides feedback to learners about their behavior

- Controls situations in which inappropriate behavior is likely to occur

- Uses verbal and non-verbal classroom management techniques effectively

B. Establishes and maintains a classroom climate conducive to learning

- Demonstrates positive verbal behavior to learners

- Demonstrates positive non-verbal behavior to learners

- Indicates confidence that all learners can and will learn

- Encourages effort and progress

- Supports learner excellence and achievement

C. Makes effective use of classroom resources

- Maximizes available learning time

- Provides clear and detailed plans and directions for substitutes, aides and other instructional assistants

- Utilizes assigned facilities to accommodate different types of learning activities

- Arranges classroom furniture and equipment to facilitate movement

- Indicates when the task is to be completed and maintains timelines

- Integrates instructional resources with teaching procedures

- Handles minor interruptions without disruption to the current task

V. Establishes and maintains a professional leadership role (Professional Leadership)

A. Improves professional skills and knowledge

- Takes formal coursework related to teaching assignment/advancement
- Obtains graduate degree(s) related to teaching assignment/advancement
- Participates in "non-required" staff development activities
- Uses ideas from books, professional journals and professional organizations to enhance classroom instruction
- Tries new methods/approaches in the classroom and evaluates their success
- Seeks and utilizes community resources to enhance classroom instruction

B. Takes leadership role in improving education

- Conducts workshops/training sessions
- Creates materials/programs and shares with others
- Holds a leadership position in school/school system
- Receives special honor(s)
- Holds leadership position in educational organizations
- Assists in establishing school goals and takes an active role in achieving them
- Takes an active role in resolving school problems
- Promotes parent/community interest in the school
- Initiates activities and projects in the school
- Shares material and resources with peers and others

- Discusses professional topics with peers and others

- Assists peers an and others in identifying and solving instructional problems

- Works cooperatively with peers, administrators and community members in planning and implementing curricular and extracurricular activities

C. (Screening)* Performs professional responsibilities efficiently

- Maintains accurate and up-to-date records

- Completes assigned tasks on schedule

- Arrives on time for class, meetings and other scheduled activities

- Maintains a satisfactory record of attendance

- Manages routine business and recordkeeping efficiently

- Follows applicable policies and procedures of the state

VI. (Screening)* Communicates effectively (Basic Communication Skills)

A. Writes clearly and correctly

- Handwrites or prints legibly

- Organizes written information

- Uses vocabulary and style appropriate to the level of the audience

- Uses correct grammar and mechanics

B. Reads professional relevant literature/materials with comprehension

*Competencies and indicators marked "screening" are expectations of all teachers. They are minimum competencies/indicators which will be assessed during the evaluation process. If a serious deficiency is found in one or more of these areas, the evaluation process may be

Appendix B

HOW WE OBTAIN OUR INFORMATION ABOUT COMPETENCIES AND INDICATORS

GENERAL EDUCATION

	CLASSROOM OBSERVATION	DIALOGUE	PRINCIPAL QUESTIONNAIRE	STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP	SUMMARY
I. Prepares for instruction effectively.						
A. Establishes appropriate instructional goals and related objectives consistent with the curriculum.	X	X	X			
B. Prepares instructional plans and materials incorporating principles of effective instruction.	X	X	X			
C. Creates, selects or modifies instructional plans and materials to accommodate learner instructional levels.		X	X			
II. Uses teaching strategies and procedures appropriate to the content, objectives, and learners.						
A. Provides a clear description of the learning task and its content.	X	X	X	X		
B. Monitors learner understanding and reteaches as necessary.	X	X	X	X		
C. Provides learners appropriate practice and review.	X	X	X	X		
D. Establishes and maintains learner involvement in the learning task.	X	X	X	X		
III. Uses evaluation to improve instruction.						
A. Uses information about learner performance to improve the instructional process.		X	X			
B. Reports learner status and progress to learners and their parents.	X	X	X	X		
C. Improves learner performance (Field Test Only)		X	X	X		
IV. Manages classroom activites effectively.						
A. Establishes and maintains appropriate learner behavior.	X		X	X		
B. Establishes and maintains a classroom climate conducive to learning.	X	X	X	X		
C. Makes effective use of classroom resources (e.g. personnel, time, materials, facilities)	X		X	X		
V. Establishes and maintains a professional leadership role.						
A. Improves professional skills and knowledge.			X		X	
B. Takes a leadership role in improving education.			X		X	
C. (Screening only) Performs professional responsibilities efficiently.			X			
VI. (Screening only) Communicates effectively.						
A. Writes clearly and correctly.						
B. Reads professionally relevant literature materials with comprehension.						